



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

John E. Murphy, U.S. Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Daryl Fields, Public Information Officer
(210) 384-7440

November 19, 2009

**CBP TECHNICIAN AND TWO OTHER DEFENDANTS ARRESTED IN EL PASO
IN DRUG / OFFICIAL CORRUPTION CASE**

United States Attorney John E. Murphy; Manny Oyola-Torres, Special Agent in Charge of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement – Office of Investigations; James E. Smith, Special Agent in Charge of the Department of Homeland Security – Office of Inspector General; and, Ana Hinojosa, Director of Field Operations -- U.S. Customs and Border Protection in El Paso today announced the arrests and federal grand jury indictment of 43-year-old U.S. Customs and Border Protection technician Martha Alicia Garnica, 40-year-old Carlos Francisco Ramirez-Rosalez and 23-year-old Edgar Ely Meraz for conspiring to import marijuana into the United States.

The indictment also charges: Garnica with one count of conspiracy to smuggle undocumented aliens, two counts of bribery of a public official and one count of importation of a controlled substance; Ramirez, one count of conspiracy to smuggle an undocumented alien, one count of bribery of a public official and one count of importation of a controlled substance; and Meraz, one count of importation of a controlled substance.

According to the indictment, since April 2009, the defendants have allegedly conspired to import into the United States from Mexico more than 100 kilograms of marijuana. The indictment further alleges that from October 1, 2009 until October 11, 2009, Garnica and Ramirez conspired to smuggle in undocumented aliens into the United States from Mexico. The indictment also alleges that on October 11, 2009, Garnica offered a \$500 bribe to a United States Customs and Border Protection officer to allow an undocumented alien to be smuggled into the United States as well as offering a \$3,500 bribe to a United States Customs and Border Protection officer on November 7, 2009, to allow a controlled substance to be imported into the United States. Finally, the indictment alleges that on November 8, 2009, Garnica, Ramirez and Meraz knowingly imported marijuana into the United States from Mexico.

In the indictment, the government is also seeking a monetary judgement in the amount of \$1,000,000 as well as the criminal forfeiture of any property used to further their illegal schemes.

The defendants remain in federal custody pending a detention hearing scheduled for Monday at 9:30am before United States Magistrate Judge Richard Mesa. Upon conviction each defendant face between ten years and life in federal prison. **An indictment is merely a charge and should not be considered as evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.**

The case was investigated by the Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement - Office of Investigations, Office of Inspector General and U.S. Customs and Border Protection Internal Affairs. Assistant United States Attorney Juanita Fielden is prosecuting this case on behalf of the government.

#####